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GUIDELINES FOR

RECRUITING AND TRAINING SURVEY INTERVIEWERS

JANUARY 1981

FEDERAL STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES SECRETARIAT,

STATISTICS CANADA

TELEPHONE (613) 995-0542

RECRUITING AND TRAINING SURVEY INTERVIEWERS

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Preface

This handbook is intended for survey sponsors or project managers who are considering or undertaking to establish a crew of interviewers, either for a one-time survey or recurring surveys. It outlines the basic steps involved in recruiting, selecting the most suitable candidates and providing them with general survey training. The practices and procedures described in this handbook reflect the combined experience of a number of experienced survey project managers and supervisors. They apply in the broad range of reasonably typical situations.

Gathering raw data for a survey has traditionally been considered to be a relatively insignificant and almost perfunctory part of the survey process. The role of the interviewer has been assumed to be quite simple in contrast to the "heavy thinking" performed by the survey planner. This has resulted in a tendency to take data collection for granted on the assumption that it is a straightforward operation. Reliance on the "common sense" and personal judgement of inadequately trained interviewers has been shown to be the cause of considerable numbers and types of errors which greatly reduce or even jeopardize the value of survey results.

Parts I to V of this handbook are intended for the guidance of survey sponsors and planners in their approach to recruiting, selecting, hiring and managing survey interviewers. Part VI is intended to be used as the basis for preparation of a general training handbook for interviewers.

Because of the many differences between individual surveys, some of the material in this handbook, particularly Part IV, will require some adaptation before it is applied to a specific survey situation.

Part I - Recruiting Survey Interviewers

1. Introduction

Before a survey involving personal interviews or telephone interviews can be carried out, it is necessary to have a sufficient number of interviewers hired and trained to do the actual interviewing. The job requires a particular combination of aptitudes, skills and abilities which many people possess to some degree and which can usually be developed further by suitable training.

However, not everyone can become a proficient interviewer. It is the responsibility of each recruiter and trainer to evaluate prospective interviewers carefully because:

(a) the quality of survey data is directly related to the quality of interviewing,

(b) interviewing costs represent the largest part of survey expenditures.

2. Job Requirements

Before attempting to recruit interviewers, the recruiter should carefully identify the requirements which must be considered. These include:

(a) Special Technical Knowledge or Experience

Interviewers should be personally familiar with the general subject area and with any special terminology normally used, although some types of experience may be transferrable to other subject-matter areas.

(b) Interviewing Skills

Will the interviewer be expected simply to ask questions and record the answers, or will he/she be expected to have the ability to probe or delve deeply into motivations for behaviour or reasons for attitudes?

(c) Language Capability

Interviewers may be required to speak both official languages or, in some geographic locations, to speak another language.

(d) Availability of Transportation

Where public transportation is not available, interviewers on personal interview surveys will be required to provide their own transportation (i.e., have unrestricted use of a car and hold a valid driver's licence).

(e) Access to Telephone

For telephone interviewing, interviewers may be required to have unrestricted use of a telephone. To ensure confidentiality, this must be a single-party line.

(e) Membership in Ethnic Group

Interviewers dealing with some ethnic groups may have to be a member of that group in order to obtain cooperation.

(f) Difficult or Unfavourable Interviewing Situations

Some surveys require interviewers to be willing to go into "rough" areas or large apartment buildings with restricted access.

3. Other Considerations

(a) Geographic Location

Recruiting efforts should be directed towards obtaining potential interviewers in or near the areas to be surveyed. Travel expenses are less and it is more convenient to have interviewers who live in or near the areas where the interviews are to be conducted. For telephone interviewing, the calls should be made from a phone within the same free calling areas as the respondents; otherwise long distance charges will increase costs significantly.

(b) Method of Data Collection

The requirements for personal interviewing and telephone interviewing are somewhat different, and this will affect the importance of some interviewer qualifications such as physical stamina, a pleasant telephone voice, willingness to travel and use of private car. For example, a physically handicapped person may be able to conduct telephone interviews.

(c) Interviewer Acceptance by Survey Population

Interviewers should not appear to be significantly different in life style from respondents. Differences in style of clothes or manner of speaking may inhibit or even intimidate respondents, causing them to censor their answers or even to refuse to answer some or all questions. In surveys on technical subjects, interviewers may have to demonstrate some familiarity with the topics in order to get respondents talking. Surveys conducted among native Indians or new Canadians tend to have a higher response rate when the interviewer belongs to the same racial or ethnic group as respondents and is familiar with the particular language or dialect. Surveys dealing with sensitive or personal topics will likely achieve better and more honest answers when the interviewer is of the same sex and age group as the respondent.

4. Interviewer Qualifications

Recruiters normally try to find interviewers who have the following qualifications:

(a) Personal Appearance

A respondent's first impression of the interviewer is likely to influence the extent to which he/she will cooperate. A well-groomed appearance and moderately conservative clothes are generally considered to be the most suitable.

(b) Personality

The successful interviewer has a pleasant personality, enjoys talking to people, including strangers, without shyness or nervousness, and displays self-confidence without being obviously aggressive.

(c) Skills and Aptitudes

Interviewers should be able to establish a good rapport with respondents, make them feel at ease and willing to answer questions. Other requirements are the abilities to ask questions tactfully, listen to answers carefully and to record the responses accurately.

(d) Physical Requirements

The physical strain of constant travelling, stair-climbing, etc., involved in interviewing is quite demanding. Consequently, interviewers must have good health and physical stamina.

(e) Education

For most survey work, an average education is needed. Basic reading, writing and mathematical skills are sufficient. Of course, if the survey population is highly educated, a similarly-educated interviewer is likely to achieve greater cooperation.

(f) Previous Experience

Any previous work involving personal contact with members of the public is likely to be useful.

(g) Motivation and Initiative

Interviewers should be enthusiastic about their work and sufficiently resourceful to overcome routine problems in order to complete assignments on time.

(h) Telephone Manner

For telephone surveys, interviewers should have a clear and pleasant speaking voice, as well as project a friendly and considerate telephone image.

(i) Availability

Interviewing must often be done in the evening or at other specific times and interviewers must be available to work these unusual hours. In cases where interviewing requires extensive travel, the interviewer may be required to be away from home overnight.

5. Solicited Applications

Initial recruitment can be done through Canada Employment Centres. When supplied with requirements of the job, these Centres can screen applicants and refer to the recruiter only those applicants who meet the requirements.

In large urban centres, a classified advertisement in a large daily paper is generally an effective method of recruiting. Advertisements should include the following:

(a) the name of the organization;
(b) the type of work;
(c) a description of the job;
(d) any special previous experience, skill or technical knowledge which may be required, including language capability.
(e) travel, transportation and telephone requirements;
(f) probable daily work schedule;
(g) probable dates and duration of job;
(h) number of days of training given and schedule of training sessions;
(i) rate of pay;
(j) deadline for applications;
(k) address to which applications should be sent.

Inclusion of these details will tend to discourage those who are not seriously interested in this type of work.

In smaller centres, recruiters may place classified advertisements in daily and/or weekly newspapers and with local radio stations. In some cases, these stations have a community service program which will publicize job opportunities at no cost.

The recruiter may also contact community college and university placement centres, fraternal and business clubs, women's clubs, local clergymen, postmasters (in rural areas), and commercial employment agencies.

Where appropriate, a quantity of printed application forms should be provided to organizations or individuals who assist in recruiting.

6. Unsolicited Applications

Interviewers and office staff may refer friends or relatives to the recruiter. This type of applicant usually is already aware of the job requirements and personal qualifications necessary. Respondents to a survey may also express interest in the work to interviewers who can refer them to the recruiter as prospective interviewers for future surveys.

7. Completion of Application Forms

Applicants who have applied by letter or who have been referred orally should be requested to complete a printed application form (see pages 45 and 46). This will serve two purposes:

(a) capture necessary personal information in case the applicant is hired;

(b) lay out the applicant's qualifications and work history for quick review.

Part II - Selecting Survey Interviewers

8. Screening the Applications

Completed application forms and/or letters of application are reviewed by the recruiter. Applicants who appear to meet the qualifications are asked to appear for a personal interview at a specified date, time and place, and given the name of the person who will conduct the interview. At this time, NO job offer is made.

Those applicants who do not meet the basic qualifications should be notified by mail that they have not been accepted, together with the reason (i.e., no car, unable to work evenings, etc.).

9. Obtaining Space for Job Interviews

Before the recruiter can inform applicants regarding the place of the job interview, it is necessary to make firm arrangements to obtain the use of suitable premises for the interviews and tests.

In the larger urban centres, the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission can often provide suitable rooms (without charge) for the interviewing of those applicants provided by the Commission.

If the recruiter works for a federal department or agency, the Department of Public Works may also be able to provide space (without charge) for interviewing.

In smaller centres, community or church halls may sometimes be used, with the only cost being the wages of a caretaker for the length of time that the hall is used.

If in other than his/her home city, the recruiter's hotel or motel may have meeting or convention rooms available for rent. As a last resort, the recruiter's rented room may be used for interviews.

The applicant's own place of residence can also be used for the interview, but is not recommended, for these reasons:

(a) the time required for the recruiter to travel to each applicant's home;

(b) interruptions which may distract the applicant;

(c) the recruiter may lose control of the interview, and it may be difficult to inform the applicant that he/she is not suitable for the job.

10. Job Interviews

Interviews should be scheduled far enough apart so that they are not rushed and the recruiter has time to evaluate each applicant adequately.

During the interview, the recruiter should refer to the information on the application form and ask the applicant to verify and/or expand on the information provided. The applicant should be asked to show how his/her experience, abilities and interests relate to the job of interviewer. In judging the applicant's answers to questions, the recruiter will be evaluating the applicant for the ability to express him/herself clearly and concisely.

At this time, the requirements of the job should be explained fully, with as much emphasis on the bad aspects of the job as on the good ones: evening work, adverse weather conditions, overnight trips, etc. If the applicant reacts adversely, he/she should be permitted to withdraw without embarrassment. Withdrawals at this time are much less costly than later, after the applicant has been trained.

11. Applicant Testing

In addition to a job interview, many survey organizations require each applicant to complete a short written test. This test might consist of basic mathematical problems and typical exercises. It will indicate how well the applicant can understand the principles of interviewing and apply them correctly. For telephone interviewers, the recruiter may arrange for part of the job interview to be conducted by phone.

A number of those who had previously shown strong interest in the job may refuse to take the test. Their withdrawal should be accepted without embarrassing them.

After the test, applicants should be told when they can expect to be informed whether or not they have been accepted.

The recruiter should record his/her evaluation of each applicant immediately after the personal interview. A point system for this recording is recommended, with a fixed number of points allocated in advance for each major factor, including the results of the written test.

12. Making an Offer of Employment

The applicants are then listed in order of the points allocated to each, and jobs offered to those who have the highest ranking. If an offer is turned down, the next (lower) applicant is offered the job.

All applicants who accept a job should then be given the time, place and duration of their classroom training.

Those applicants who were not successful should be informed by letter and the reason identified. If there are more qualified candidates than there are jobs, these should be informed that their names are being kept on file, and that they may be called if the need arises (e.g., if some interviewers resign during the survey, future survey, etc.).

13. Advance Reading by Trainees

Where feasible, the recruiter may provide selected applicants with a copy of an interviewer's instruction manual at the same time as they are notified of acceptance for training. Trainees may then note any points in the manual which are not clear. This practice will tend to reduce classroom training time.

Part III - Arrangements for Training Survey Interviewers

14. General

While interviewers should always be expected to apply common sense to many aspects of their work, the training of interviewers is intended primarily to inform them about approved interviewing techniques and attitudes, and the required administrative procedures. It also provides them with the opportunity to learn from the accumulated experience of others in dealing with potential problem areas.

The net result of training should be that all interviews are conducted in a specified manner and that all interviewers deal with similar situations in a uniform pattern. When individual interviewers are permitted to use their own judgement in selecting respondents or making substitutions for absent respondents, to develop their own survey techniques, to explain questions "in their own words", or to decide on borderline situations, etc., it has been found that these individual decisions vary so widely as to make the survey results of questionable value.

The actual content of the training material varies, depending on the type of survey organization, the type of survey, etc. However, there are two general types of training: general survey training which is relevant to all surveys, and specific training for a particular survey. In cases where interviewers are hired for only one survey, these two types of training are combined. For ongoing work where the interviewer will be conducting quite different surveys from time to time, the general training is not repeated but survey-specific training is always given just prior to each new survey on which interviewers will be working.

A recommended training package consists of the following four elements:

(a) a survey interviewer's manual or handbook which deals with these topics, as appropriate:

- principles of survey-taking;
- methods of interviewing;
- interviewing techniques;
- sampling concepts and basic procedures;
- procedures for planning a work assignment;
- procedures for recording sample selection steps;
- procedures for recording work progress;
- procedures for dealing with exceptional situations;
- administrative procedures
- pay and expense claim procedures.

(b) classroom instruction on:

(i) contents of the interviewer's instruction manual;
(ii) the actual questionnaire to be used in the survey.

(c) simulated or mock interviews in the classroom;

(d) actual interviews in the field while accompanied by a senior interviewer or supervisor.

15. Qualifications of Trainers

In order to train others effectively, trainers should have these qualifications:

- a thorough knowledge of the subject;
- enthusiasm to impart this knowledge;
- patience;
- a firm, fair and friendly manner of controlling the class;
- the ability to attain a rapport with the class.

(a) A thorough knowledge of the subject involves much more than familarity with the content of printed reference materials. The trainer should be able to give indications of personal experience with the procedures and techniques being discussed. Description of a case or cases can be a useful supplement to printed materials.

If the trainer cannot answer a question, the question must not be ignored, or the questionner made to feel embarrassed. The best approach is for the trainer to acknowledge that he/she does not know (or is not certain of) the answer and will attempt to obtain a full answer. The answer should be obtained as soon as possible and given to the questionner (or to the entire class, as appropriate) before completion of the training sessions.

(b) Enthusiasm to impart knowledge about a subject is necessary in order to convey the impression that the subject being taught is worthwhile. Although the trainer may have covered the material many times before, it is probably quite new to the trainees and they will require a certain amount of time to become acquainted with it.

(c) Patience is required because the same questions are likely to be asked by each new class - and the same errors are likely to be made, as well. Questions should be dealt with immediately, if possible, so that the point which is not understood is cleared up before proceeding.

(d) A firm, fair and friendly manner is needed to ensure that the trainer does not lose control of the class. Trainers should be on the alert for:

- one or more members of the class who tend to monopolize questions;
- discussions on subjects beyond the scheduled subject matter;
- allowing break or lunch periods to become longer than planned.

16. Duration and Extent of Interviewer Training

The duration (number of hours or days) of training required will depend on the complexity of the survey. If the person doing the training does not have sufficient experience to estimate this in advance, the duration of the training may be left open. In all cases, however, sufficient time must be allotted to practise interviews; otherwise, the performance of the new interviewers will remain an unknown factor.

New interviewers should be informed that their work will be subject to close examination for quality until they have acquired experience and have proven their competence, and that random periodic checks will be made after they have become proficient. Interviewers employed on successive surveys should also be informed that they will be given further on-going training from time to time.

17. Preparation for Classrooms

(a) Obtaining Space for Training

Before the recruiter can inform successful applicants regarding the place in which training classes will be held, it is necessary to make firm arrangements for the use of suitable premises. This procedure is the same as that for obtaining space for interviewing, but is repeated here for trainers who did not participate in recruiting.

If the trainer works for a federal department or agency, the Department of Public Works may be able to provide space (without charge) for training.

In smaller centres, community or church halls may sometimes be used, with the only cost being the wages of a caretaker for the length of time that the hall is used.

If not in his/her home city, the trainer's hotel or motel may have meeting or convention rooms available for rent. As a last resort, the trainer's rented room may be used for training.

The applicant's own place of residence can also be used for training, but is not recommended. The trainer has no control over interruptions. There is also the fact that the trainer will likely find it more difficult to conduct the training.

If possible, the classroom should have the following:

- comfortable temperature and adequate air circulation;
- adequate lighting without glare;
- desks or tables;
- wide aisles between desks;
- comfortable but firm chairs (no chesterfields);
- facilities for refreshments.

(b) Size of Group for Training

An experienced survey trainer can comfortably handle up to ten trainees at any one training course. This number permits a more personal type of instruction than is possible with larger groups. If there are many more than ten trainees, it is advisable to allocate them into two or more courses, with the training of each group done either simultaneously by different trainers or sequentially by the one trainer.

(c) Equipment for Training Sessions

The classroom should be supplied with the following items:

- a pre-packaged training kit for each trainee, consisting of Survey Interviewer's Manual (if not given out earlier), sample questionnaires, paper and writing materials;
- cardboard name card for each trainee;
- blackboard, chalk, eraser and pointer;
- easel and flip chart paper;
- overhead projector
- lectern (desirable but not necessary);
- ash trays and wastebaskets.

(d) Training Session Deportment

The attitude projected by the trainer and the discipline demonstrated during the training sessions establishes a distinct atmosphere and is an important aspect of the training package. The approach should be generally informal but business-like.

18. Administrative Preliminaries

1. Once seated to their satisfaction, trainees should be asked to sit in the same place throughout the training, and to have their name cards in front of them at all sessions to facilitate identification by the trainer and other trainees.

2. The first session should begin with the trainer outlining the daily training schedule: starting time, break and lunch times, and finishing time. This schedule should be followed closely. The location of the nearest cafeteria or restaurant should be identified. (If circumstances permit, the trainer may arrange for coffee, etc., to be brought to the classroom at specified times.) The locations of washrooms in the building should also be identified.

3. Interviewer-trainees who are newly hired may have surprisingly little knowledge concerning their employer's business activities and unrealistic ideas about surveys. Yet as interviewers, they will be asked many questions in the course of their work and it is highly desirable that they have sufficient background of a general nature to handle these questions in a convincing manner:

(a) Information about the employer's business activities need by only quite general, but should include things like overall size, location of head office and branches, and the principal products or services provided.

(b) Information about surveys should include an overview of those techniques which are commonly used in information research, plus some of the most often used terminology.

(c) Besides the factual information described in (a) and (b), there are also general survey principles which apply to all interviewer surveys, whether these are personal (face-to-face) interviews or telephone interviews.

4. The general pattern of an interviewer's working day should be outlined, with emphasis on the organization and personal discipline needed to maximize effectiveness on the job.

5. It is good practice at this time to explain the method and frequency of payment for interviewers, extent of possible delay until first pay is received and similar administrative details. (Most survey organizations pay trainees for all time spent in training, once they have been accepted as trainees.)

6. The next item to be explained should be the completion of the Interviewer Weekly Claim Sheet (or equivalent). It should be emphasized that this Claim Sheet should be kept up-to-date and is NOT to be filled in a day or two after the events have taken place. A suggested Claim Sheet is shown on pages 47 and 48.

19. Conducting Effective Training Sessions

(a) Training should be conducted in a generally informal but businesslike manner. The atmosphere and approach adopted by the trainer will set an example to the trainees as to how they should treat their work and deal with respondents. Questions should be encouraged at any time during the sessions and should be answered as fully as possible by the trainer. Points which are not clear to one trainee may also not be clear to others.

(b) The trainer must remain in control of the class. Some of the ways in which control can be lost are:

(i) allowing lunch and break periods to become longer than planned;

(ii) allowing digressions from the lesson plan. This can occur when the answer to a question contains an example which is allowed to expand or branch out more than is necessary, or where a trainee brings up a problem which is outside the scope of the particular session.

(iii) allowing one or more trainees to monopolize the questions or discussions. This can be avoided by the trainer addressing questions to different trainees by name.

(c) The trainer must have each session planned in advance. At a minimum, this involves preparing a summary of the principal points which must be covered and a sequence for their presentation.

(d) The trainer must show enthusiasm for the subject matter and not permit boredom or impatience to show, regardless of how many times the same facts are presented or the same questions asked. To the trainee, the material is probably entirely new, and questions must be expected.

(e) The trainer must appear to be and actually be accessible to help individual trainees to understand particular points which may be giving them difficulty or to deal with any other problems related to the job. If the matter is of general interest, it may be discussed in class. If the matter concerns only one or a few trainees, the trainer may arrange a time outside of class hours to deal with it.

(f) If the trainer cannot answer a particular question, the trainee should be told that an answer will be obtained as soon as possible, and the trainer must then endeavour to meet this commitment. The trainer must not appear annoyed with the trainee for having asked the question.

(g) The trainer should ensure that training details are fully understood, point by point. If a trainee does not fully understand a point, the understanding of subsequent points may suffer. Some trainees may have difficulty understanding abstract or theoretical concepts; in these cases, the trainer should use examples or cases to make the point clear to the trainees.

(h) Care should be taken to avoid having trainees becoming bored. A good technique is to introduce a short practical exercise at appropriate intervals which requires individual participation of all trainees. Individual training sessions should not exceed 40 minutes and should be followed by rest breaks of five minutes. Questions should be encouraged at any time because a trainee may require an explanation of a particular point before he/she can assimilate subsequent points. A good technique for maintaining alertness is to select a trainee from the class at random and ask for his/her interpretation of a point or a simple problem related to it.

(i) Each training period should be closed off with a recap of the material covered and the trainees given another opportunity to ask questions. If there are no questions, the trainer can ask one of the trainees to explain a point; this often generates other questions from trainees.

(j) Training is not complete until each trainee has conducted at least one simulated or "mock" interviews in the classroom, using other trainees as respondents. These simulated interviews should be conducted in as authentic a manner as possible, and contain all elements of an actual interview. Mock classroom interviews are a useful training device, both to those trainees actually involved and to the others who are observing them. Each interview should be followed by a general discussion of its good points and faults.

20. Telephone Interviewing

(a) Special Requirements

There are a number of differences between telephone interviewing and personal (face-to-face) interviewing. An interviewer who is good at one type may not be good at the other. The telephone interview cannot use visual aids such as exhibits or flashcards, cannot gauge the respondent's interest by observing "body language" or facial expression, and must rely entirely on the spoken language to establish and maintain the respondent's interest and rapport.

The principal requirements for being a good telephone interviewer are:

(1) ability to enunciate clearly;
(2) ability to project a pleasant "image" and to maintain an "enthusiastic" telephone manner;
(3) ability to persevere at a somewhat repetitive task;
(4) ability to explain survey requirements clearly and concisely;
(5) ability to accept abrupt refusals. (It is easier for a respondent to terminate a telephone conversation than to refuse an interview face-to-face.)
(6) ability to keep careful records of work progress and to take appropriate action when there is no answer, when the line is busy, or when the respondent states that the present time is not convenient.

(b) Training Telephone Interviewers

The training of telephone interviewers is normally quite survey-specific and the questionnaire to be used must be available.

The trainer should begin by going through the questionnaire with the trainees, question by question, and describing the meaning or intent of each question (even if it appears to be obvious) and the general nature of the desired answers. This will enable the interviewer to decide quickly whether a respondent's answers are adequate or whether further probing is required.

21. Classroom Presentation of Handbook Material

Some trainees may argue with the need for them to attend training classes in order to be given information contained in the interviewer's instruction manual which they already have. There are several good reasons for this apparent duplication.

(a) The trainees may or may not have read the Handbook. They MUST be familiar with the information in the Handbook before conducting interviews.

(b) The trainees may have read the Handbook only superficially and may have missed many of the less obvious points mentioned.

(c) The trainees may have misinterpreted some of the instructions in the Handbook and it is only through discussion and practical exercises that the implications of many of the instructions become clear to all trainees.

(d) The trainees may have read the handbook but do not fully understand some instructions and have not bothered to make note of the problem.

(e) Each trainee must learn a uniform method of coping with problems and dealing with nonstandard situations, insofar as these affect the quality of data and the response rate. This uniformity can be achieved only through group instructions and discussions, followed by practical exercises (simulated interviews).

22. The Initial Personal Interview

Before being assigned to conduct actual interviews, the trainee should accompany an experienced interviewer for several interviews. This part of the training includes setting up a work schedule for the day and, if required, selection of the households, individuals, etc., to be interviewed that day.

The experienced interviewer then proceeds to conduct several interviews accompanied by the trainee who is introduced to respondents as an observer trainee. After each interview, it is discussed between the trainee and experienced interviewer, and any questions which the trainee may ask are answered as fully as possible.

After several interviews, the roles are reversed and the trainee conducts the interview, with the experienced interviewer being introduced to respondents as an observer. After each interview, the trainee's strengths and weaknesses are discussed. The weaknesses or faults should not be emphasized unduly, and due credit should be expressed concerning the trainee's strengths.

During the actual interview the experienced interviewer must not interrupt unless the trainee is in serious trouble with the interview. Any interruption should be done tactfully, without the transition becoming obvious to the respondent. Explanation for the take-over by the experienced interviewer should be given to the trainee after the interview has been completed and where they can discuss the matter in private before proceeding to the next interview. The experienced interviewer may wish to have the trainee observe additional interviews before attempting to interview again.

When the trainee appears to be able to carry on alone, the experienced interviewer informs the trainee accordingly. The experienced interviewer or a supervisor should scan the trainee's completed questionnaires each evening for a few days to ensure that they are completed properly, and should advise on any problems which the trainee may wish to discuss.

Part IV - Administrative Records

23. Personnel File

Organizations which have a number of interviewers normally maintain a separate file for each interviewer, containing the interviewer application form and other relevant personal information, such as:

- special qualifications or aptitudes,
- performance reviews,
- limitations on availability for survey work (does not have access to a car, is on a party telephone, etc.),
- payroll information (deductions, etc.).

24. Expense Claim

All payments made to an interviewer should be supported by a detailed claim sheet. A typical expense claim sheet is shown on pages 47 and 48. This form is intended for surveys where interviewers are paid by the hour; for surveys where payment is by interviews completed, a different layout may be required.

Interviewers should be instructed that they are required to provide receipts for overnight accommodation and meals while travelling, parking fees, etc., to support claims for these expenses.

Research organizations normally maintain a separate expense file for each interviewer for each survey project, containing a record of all fees and expenses claimed and of payments made to that interviewer. (This file may be combined with the personnel file.)

Part V - Survey Administration

25. Interviewer Identification

Most survey research organizations provide their interviewers with personal identification cards and/or a letter of introduction, signed by an official in the survey organization or the sponsor.

Interviewers should also be provided with a telephone number which can be given to reluctant or suspicious respondents for them to call for more information about the survey or the sponsoring organization.

26. Interviewer Assignments

Interviewers are usually provided with either:

- a list of dwellings, households or persons to be interviewed, or
- a procedure for selection of dwellings, households or persons to be interviewed, together with a form for listing those actually selected by the interviewer.

Interviewers should also be provided with a large-scale map of the survey area, to be used both as a guide to the desired locations and for checking off the locations of completed interviews.

27. Work Plan for Interviewers

Interviewers should have an outline of a general work plan and schedule mapped out for them. Of course, the thoroughness of this outline will depend on the complexity and duration of the assignment.

Providing such an outline will have several benefits:

- interviewers will approach their work in a more orderly manner;
- interviewers will have some measure of the number of interviews expected of them per day;
- the employer will have a reasonable yardstick for evaluating interviewers;
- interviewers can estimate the "Percentage completed" more easily, if progress reports are required at intervals.

28. Use of Pencil vs. Pen

Interviewers should be instructed as to how survey entries are to be recorded. Many large survey organizations require interviewers to make all entries in ordinary black lead pencil. Subsequent editing, coding and other processing entries are made with a specified colour of lead pencil, so that these stand out clearly from the original entries. In general, all entries on a questionnaire should be made by a lead pencil, so that any revisions can be made more easily (so that the final entry is reasonably legible for tabulation or data capture).

29. Record of Interviews

Interviewers should keep a record of their efforts to contact respondents, whether or not an interview is obtained. A suggested Record of Interviews is shown on page 49. This form should be turned in on completion of the assignment to provide data on the various types of nonresponse for analysis purposes and for use in evaluation of interviewers.

30. Security of Collected Data

The integrity and credibility of the survey organization can be seriously undermined by interviewers who do not carefully safeguard the data collected. Interviewers should be instructed to take precautions to ensure that:

(a) completed questionnaires do not become available to anyone outside of the survey organization;

(b) completed questionnaires cannot be read by other respondents (or by the interviewer's family or friends);

(c) they do not reveal answers, given by respondents, to other respondents or to family or friends, either during the survey or afterwards.

31. Progress Reports

For surveys which extend over several weeks or longer, or where interviewers are dispersed over a large geographic area, most survey organizations establish a specific reporting procedure and require that interviewers report their work progress regularly. These reports may be made by telephone or by mail, and usually every week or more often.

In addition to progress-to-date, these reports give the survey office an indication of overall survey progress, of the level of nonresponse being encountered, and the number and nature of unusual problems which may require special action.

32. Problem Respondents

If refusals are a significant problem, the survey organization may wish to develop a special technique for keeping refusals as low as possible.

Some survey organizations request interviewers to report refusals as soon as possible after they occur. The organization then arranges for a senior interviewer or supervisor to attempt to obtain an interview using whatever persuasion and/or strategy the circumstances appear to require. This is particularly important where the sample is quite small, or where the omission of an important respondent may have a serious effect on survey results.

Individual interviewers may have a higher-than-average refusal rate. This may be an interviewer problem rather than a respondent problem. It may be found, for example, that some interviewers have unusual difficulty obtaining rapport from particular types of respondents.

33. Survey Quality Control

(a) General

Maintaining quality control in a survey is accomplished by establishing a certain level of quality for each task in the survey and then conducting an on-going monitoring action to ensure that deviations from this established level are within acceptable limits. Because there is no way in which the extent of most errors can be defined retroactively on completion of the survey, this monitoring must take place simultaneously with the survey itself.

(b) Examples of Error

Experience has shown that a variety of errors are likely to creep into every survey, such as:

(i) sampling procedure error, in which the interviewer does not follow the rules for sample selection (to avoid a threatening dog or a disreputable or dangerous area, or out of carelessness or ignorance);

(ii) interview administration error, in which the interviewer does not ask all of the specified questions because of a mistaken assumption, or records data in the wrong place on the questionnaire, etc.;

(iii) survey content error, in which questions are not asked in a neutral manner or are rephrased by the interviewer instead of being asked exactly as written;

(iv) respondent error, in which the respondent misunderstands a question, or has a faulty memory;

(v) recording error, in which errors are made by the interviewer when entering answers or editing completed questionnaires.

(c) Random vs. Systematic Errors

Errors can be classified into two general types:

- Random errors are those which are not directional and therefore tend to balance each other (i.e., cancel each other out);

- Systematic errors (commonly called bias) are those errors which tend to be in the same direction and thereby exert a cumulative effect, usually resulting in significantly distorted findings.

(d) Quality Control Methods

Quality control can be exercised in any survey by some or all of the following:

(i) by having newly-trained interviewers accompanied by a supervisor or an experienced interviewer until the new interviewer demonstrates an acceptable level of proficiency (this applies to both personal interview and telephone surveys);

(ii) by scanning the completed work of new interviewers as soon as possible (such as daily) for errors, omissions and discrepancies (this also applies to experienced interviewers who are working on a new survey);

(iii) by holding periodic meetings or debriefing sessions with interviewers to:

- deal with problems which they may have encountered, such as nonresponse, misinterpretation of questions by respondents, difficulties with interview procedures, etc.

- inform them of any modifications or additions to the content of the interviewer's instruction manual which have been developed to deal with previously unforeseen problems, such as the disposition of borderline cases, etc.

(iv) by reinterviewing a small percentage of each interviewer's respondents (key questions only) and comparing the results of the reinterview with the results of the original interview (reinterviews are done only by supervisors or experienced interviewers; they are explained to respondents as routine checks to ensure quality interviewing);

(v) by checking with a small percentage of respondents to ensure that they were actually interviewed at the time and by the method as stated by the interviewer.

Faults in an interviewer's work detected by the quality control program may or may not be intentional. However, they should be brought to the interviewer's attention as promptly as possible in order to improve the quality of future data collection.

34. On-Going Interviewer Training

This training may be conducted as needed, and may be either on a one-to-one basis or with a group of interviewers.

In one-to-one sessions, the supervisor and the interviewer discuss obvious errors, discrepancies, incomplete questionnaires and other problems pertaining to the interviewer's work. The supervisor can identify the specific corrective action needed in each case.

In group sessions, each interviewer receives a record of his/her own errors, discrepancies, etc., prior to the session; these faults are then discussed in general by the supervisor at the group session without identifying the interviewers involved. Interviewers are also invited to consult with the supervisor on problems requiring individual attention.

In the case of repetitive surveys, the supervisor may prescribe additional home study exercises to be completed by some interviewers. These exercises should be marked by the supervisor and the results in the hands of the interviewer before the next cycle of interviews.

Part IV - GUIDELINES FOR TRAINING SURVEY INTERVIEWERS

This part of the handbook is included to provide survey sponsors with material for general training purposes. It is written in a format which can be used directly for inclusion in a training manual. However, the material is quite broad and each sponsor is advised to select only those items which are relevant to his/her survey. Additional, survey-specific training is also recommended to ensure that interviewers are thoroughly familiar with the questionnaire and the way in which it should be administered.

1. Introduction to Surveys

As an interviewer, you will probably be interested in knowing about the survey process and how your work fits into the overall plan.

First off, a survey is not the casual occurence which is inferred by the news media where results of surveys are quoted almost every day. There is a great deal of planning and testing which must be done in order to conduct a satisfactory survey, to ensure that the right questions are asked of the right group of people and that these questions are asked in a way which brings out answers which are as factual as possible. Most of this planning and testing takes place before you, as an interviewer, become involved.

What is a survey? Probably the best and the simplest definition is that it is the active requesting and collecting of information from other persons.

What are the steps in a survey? After the decision is taken to conduct a survey on a particular subject area, the process contains these major steps:

1 - Decision on which topics are to be included (and those which are not to be included);

2 - Identification of the general type of persons at whom the survey is directed;

3 - Selection of specific question wording, and layout of questionnaire;

4 - Field testing of: questionnaire;
method of identifying and selecting persons to be interviewed;
whether selected persons can provide desired information.

6 - Selection of specific individuals to be interviewed;

7 - Full scale survey;

8 - Editing of completed questionnaire;

9 - Coding of information (to facilitate compilation);

10 - Keying (capturing) of information for computer processing;

11 - Compilation and production of a report.

These 11 steps represent only the major steps. Some of them, particularly field testing and revision, may occur several times over during preparation of a single survey until it is felt to be satisfactory.

There are many faults and problems which can creep into a survey and affect the results. Most of these can be avoided by careful planning and testing, but others can be detected only by continual vigilance and double-checking by everyone concerned during the actual collection and processing steps by means of a process known as Quality Control.

After the desired information has been collected by interviewers and recorded on questionnaires, the questionnaires are sent to the survey office for editing, coding and data capture.

Editing consists of checking questionnaires for completeness and internal consistency. Any major errors or omissions may be referred back to the interviewer for clarification or completion.

Coding consists of reviewing the information collected and assigning symbols (usually digits) to descriptive information to make computer processing easier.

Data capture consists of keying the coded information onto computer cards or tape for tabulation and preparation of tables.

Because of the large number of questionnaires involved and the need to standardize all entries for computer processing, it is necessary that every person involved in a survey observe a strict set of definitions and recording procedures. Interviewers must use the same terminology as processing staff so that survey results have precise meaning.

For example, when asking a question about income, it is essential that all interviewers collect comparable information. If some interviewers asked the amount of the respondent's salary or wages, and other interviewers interpreted the question to mean total income of the person or the income of everyone in the household, these two answers would not be comparable.

Consequently, all answers to that question would have to be discarded if the survey office could not identify exactly what income was included in the answers collected.

A survey seldom covers everyone in a particular group about whom information is wanted, because interviewing everyone would be too costly, and time-consuming. Instead, only a fraction (sometimes a very small fraction) of the members of the group are selected by sampling and only this fraction is interviewed.

2. Building a Good Interviewing Relationship

The interviewer is an essential contributor to the success of a survey. Regardless of the care which has gone into planning a survey and designing the questionnaire, it is the interviewer who actually approaches the respondent and persuades him/her to answer a list of questions.

It has been found that respondents usually react more to their relationship with the interviewer than to the content of the questions which they are asked. In effect, respondents are likely to remember more about the interviewer and about how the interview was conducted than they will about the topics covered in the interview. This indicates how important it is for the interviewer to be an understanding person who accepts what the respondent says without apparent judgment or rejection of the respondent.

The interviewer's own attitude toward the importance and worth of the survey is often reflected in the way the respondent reacts to the request for an interview. As an interviewer, you have a right to ask a person for an interview, just as he/she has a right to refuse. If your approach is uncertain or uneasy, if you cannot answer questions relating to the survey or to the reasons why it is being conducted, the respondent is likely to react accordingly.

3. Characteristics of a Good Interviewer

The interviewer should display warmth and sensitivity toward the respondent, and acceptance of him/her as a person. This includes accepting the answers received without the interviewer expressing any personal viewpoint or whether he/she agrees or not with the viewpoints expressed by the respondent. This atmosphere of uncritical acceptance leads the respondent to recognize that no reasonable answer is out of place.

There must be complete freedom from pressure of coercion. The interviewer must not state personal ideas or preferences concerning survey questions, and must not react to any answers given by the respondent.

The purpose of interviewing is to gather information and not to change or influence the respondent. Consequently, the interviewer must not show any personal attitude toward answers given by respondents or to appear to pass judgements on them in any way. Questions should be asked in a neutral way and answers recorded without comment or reaction.

Training and practice combined will assist the interviewer to set the stage for an interview in which the respondent is most likely to respond openly and frankly to the questions asked.

The first step for the interviewer is to establish a friendly relationship with the respondent in order to obtain and maintain cooperation. A good interviewer strives to maintain a delicate balance between being aggressive and being needlessly hesitant.

The doorstep is not a very convenient place to carry on an interview and to establish a friendly relationship. For this reason, the doorstep introduction should be brief, just sufficient to get the interviewer into the house. It is easier for the respondent to refuse on the doorstep than in the living room.

Questions which permit negative responses can lead the respondent into refusing to admit the interviewer into the house, or refusing to be interviewed.

The interviewer should always assume the affirmative situation: that it is permissible to step into the house, that the respondent is not too busy to be interviewed immediately, etc. However, if the respondent states otherwise, the interviewer should tactfully ask the respondent to name a more suitable time for an interview.

The person who answers the door may not be the person who is to be interviewed. A friendly attitude toward this person is more likely to help in the interviewer's attempts to contact the designated person.

4. Introduction to the Interview

The respondent's first reaction to your request for an interview is likely to be a mixture of curiosity and a desire to be courteous to a stranger. While this amount of interest is not sufficient to conduct a full interview, it does give you time to demonstrate your friendly intentions and to describe the survey in such a way that the respondent's further interest is stimulated.

The first thing the respondent will notice about you is your appearance. Even in this day of casual clothes, it is still desirable that you dress for the occasion, that is, wear business clothes for interviews with businessmen or older people, and more informal clothes when interviewing younger people or when interviewing in informal environments. It is a

good idea to avoid clothes or accessories which identify you as a member of some club or fraternal organization. The respondent should be led to concentrate on you and the interview, and not on some unrelated distraction.

The next thing the respondent focuses on is what you say and the way in which you say it.

Tell the respondent who you are and whom you represent. Introduce yourself by name and identify the organization for which you are conducting the survey. If the respondent appears to question your statements, have your identification ready for showing.

Tell the respondent what you are doing. Try to do this in a few words as possible, all the while keeping in mind that you may be suspected of being a salesperson in disguise. Your survey office will likely have provided you with a preferred wording for you to use.

Tell how the respondent was chosen. Again, keep it short as possible and use the wording supplied by your survey office.

Describe precautions to ensure confidentiality. These will be supplied by your survey office. As a rule, identification of respondents is used for sampling purposes, survey control and verification of interviews, and is then dropped entirely during the process of tabulating.

The respondent should be made to feel that the survey is legitimate and worthwhile. The confidence with which you introduce the survey will influence the respondent's acceptance of it as significant and worthwhile. Your own state of mind is likely to be recognized by the respondent. If your approach is uneasy and hesitant, or if you cannot answer fairly basic questions about the survey and its purpose, the respondent is less likely to respond to you favourably.

The respondent should be made to feel that the interview will be a pleasant and satisfying experience (i.e., not a threatening experience). Once the respondent understands that the survey will present an opportunity to freely express his/her views, feelings, opinions, etc., your job as an interviewer will become easier.

Adapt your approach to the situation. The successful interviewer can size up a situation quickly, and act accordingly. Approach each respondent (or person who opens the door) as though he/she is friendly and interested. Vary your approach according to your intuition about the person. Adapt your introductory remarks to him/her, to the type of language he/she uses, to the kind of things he/she wants to know. With some respondents, you can get an interview with only a brief explanation of the basic points; with others you will have to go into considerable detail.

Do not be too specific about the survey when inroducing it to the respondent. It is important that you use only general terms when you describe the subject matter so that the introduction does not give any indication of the type of answers wanted.

Try to establish rapport with the respondent by a few moments of "small talk" about the weather, some local event, or other non-controversial topic. This will help to ease the situation and help to get the conversation started. Rapport is reinforced when the respondent learns what is expected of him/her in the interview situation, and that you, the interviewer, are a friendly person who is ready to listen carefully to what he/she has to say concerning the interview topics. Throughout the interview, and particularly in its early stages, you will wish to make a careful effort to establish the tone of the interview in the respondent's mind. Thus, the respondent quickly perceives what role that the interviewer expects him/her to play.

(a) "Why me?" is one of the questions which many respondents will ask. Some will be curious and others may be suspicious of how they came to be selected for an interview. The sampling process can be outlined very briefly: that counties and cities are selected and that these are further broken down into smaller areas, eventually arriving at specific addresses (not names of actual residents), or that one in every so many persons is selected, etc., or whatever other sampling method is used. Keep the explanation short and as simple as possible. You can explain that the principle is to obtain a good cross-section of people with the minimum number of interviews.

(b) "What's the survey all about, anyway?" You can explain that your organization is interested in collecting opinions or facts about some topics of current interest, and that the individual replies will be added up to obtain an overall picture of the situation.

Note: Where names and/or addresses are recorded this is usually done for survey control purposes only - check with the survey office on this point.

(c) "What good will come from me answering your questions?" The answer to this is that informed decisions on a government program or a manufacturer's product are much better than a rough-and-ready guess. While there may be no short-term benefit, the respondent is assisting the government or other organization make a more informed decision by asking users (or potential users) or recipients what they think about the program, service or product.

(d) "I don't know much about it." The answer to this is that the survey is collecting opinions of people about the particular topic, not their familiarity with it. A person may have good reason to have opinions about public services or programs without actually knowing very much about how they function.

(e) "Why don't you go next door?" In order to get a good cross-section of people in the sample, you (the interviewer) have been instructed to follow a specific plan and you are not permitted to deviate from this plan.

5. Using the questionnaire

A questionnaire is usually the product of considerable planning and testing to ensure that the questions are easily understood by most people and that the same questions are asked of all respondents.

However, there is one deviation from this principle in some questionnaires where certain questions do not apply to all respondents. In these cases, the questionnaire will have what is called a "skip-pattern" which takes care of this situation. Skip instructions are normally included in the questionnaire - consult your survey office if you have any problems.

(a) Do not let the questionnaire dominate the interview. Use the questionnaire as a guide but use it informally. The interview should be conducted in an informal and relaxed atmosphere. You should avoid creating the impression that the interview is a quiz or cross-examination. Try to keep the interview going as a casual conversation and do not, in any way by words or manner, imply criticism, surprise, approval or disapproval of the questions or of the respondent's answers.

Maintaining a relaxed atmosphere does not mean that you can be sloppy or that you can reword the questions as you might like to do. It requires that you are thoroughly familiar with the wording of each question, so that you can read it smoothly without hesitation.

(b) Read the questions exactly as they appear on the questionnaire. Respondents are strongly influenced by the way in which a question is worded. Consequently, if the wording of a questionnaire is changed for some respondents, their answers will likely be somewhat different for that reason alone, and the sum total of all the answers to that question will be affected accordingly. This problem affects every question used in a survey.

For example, a question might read: "Where do you get most of your news about current events in this country - from radio, TV, newspapers or talking to other people?"

An alternative wording might be: "Where do you get most of your news about current events in this country?" (The response categories have been completely omitted.)

A second alternative wording might be: "Where do you get most of your news about current events in this country - from radio, newspapers, or talking to other people?" (One news source, TV, is omitted).

A third alternative wording might be: "Where do you get most of your news about events affairs in this country - from radio, TV, newspaper or talking to people? That is, which one do you rely on most?" (This last conversational comment changes the question considerably because it focuses the respondent's attention on reliable news, which might come from a different source than the most frequent source.)

(c) Ask questions in the order in which they appear - one at a time. The sequence of questions is designed to create a sense of continuity, but not to indicate what answer is expected to any one question. The effect of this standardized sequence could be ruined if, for instance, you were to change the order or to read off a number of related questions to the respondent and then ask him/her to start answering the first question.

(d) Read each question slowly. A slow and deliberate pace is best because it gives the respondent time to understand the full scope of the question and to prepare a reply. Any attempt to hurry up the reading of questions may take actually more time because the respondent may ask for a question to be repeated, or the respondent may answer only that part of a question which he/she understood. Although you will become very familiar with the questions during numerous interviews, try to remember that the questions are new to each respondent, and each person must be given an equal chance to understand and reply to all questions which apply to him/her.

(e) Ask every question specified in the questionnaire. In answering one question, a respondent may sometimes also provide information which is asked for in a later question. Or, in a long list of similar questions, the respondent may offer a general answer to all of them. Do not assume answers. It is your responsibility to make certain that the respondent is asked each relevant question in the questionnaire.

When encountering a question which you feel has been partially answered by the answer to a previous question, preface the question with some remark to show the respondent that you have not forgotten what he/she said earlier. For example, you might say, "We have already touched on this, but let me ask you ..." or "We must ask people each of these questions separately".

(f) Repeat a question if it has been misunderstood or misinterpreted. Questions in the questionnaire are worded so that they will be understood by the greatest possible number of respondents. If they are not understood, the best technique is to repeat the question (slowly) exactly as it appears on the questionnaire.

If the respondent appears to be considering the question, simply wait and do not press for an immediate answer. If you think that the

respondent is hesitating because he/she is uncertain about the adequacy of his/her answer, you may make a neutral conversational remark, such as: "There are no right or wrong answers. What are your ideas?"

If the respondent asks for an explanation of the question or of any part of the question, do not provide an explanation - yours may or may not be correct. Ask the respondent to deal with it as best he/she can. If the respondent prefers not to do so, note in the margin that "R (respondent) did not understand Q (question)" and move on to the next question.

6. Interviewing Techniques

One of the most challenging and most difficult aspects of your work as an interviewer is getting respondents to answer satisfactorily all the relevant questions on a questionnaire. The respondent may give you incomplete or irrelevant answers, may misunderstand or misinterpret a question or may drift onto another topic entirely while answering a question. It is your responsibility to get him/her back on track through careful, neutral techniques. The quality of the interview depends to a large extent on your ability to persuade the respondent to enlarge on, clarify or explain the reasons behind his/her answers.

(a) Repeating the question - When the respondent does not seem to understand the question, or misinterprets it, or is unable to decide on an answer or strays from the subject, the most useful technique is to repeat the question. The respondent may not have heard or understood the question fully the first time. On hearing it for the second time, many respondents will quickly grasp what kind of answer is needed.

(b) An expectant pause - The simplest way to convey to a respondent that you know he/she has begun to answer the question, is to be silent. This pause can be accompanied by an expectant look or a nod of the head. It prompts the respondent to organize his/her thoughts and provide an answer.

Accepting pauses during an interview can be difficult for the new interviewer. You may experience a desperate feeling that things should be kept moving, and a few seconds of silence seem to last forever. Quite often, a pause can be useful in encouraging communication, and should become a natural part of your interviewing technique.

However, you must be careful about over-using this technique and be sensitive as to how the particular respondent is reacting. Some respondents may have run out of ideas and a pause can become an embarrassing silence instead of an encouragement of further thought.

(c) Repeating the respondent's reply - Casually repeating what the respondent has just said is often an excellent technique. This should be done as you are recording the answer. Hearing his/he idea repeated often stimulates the respondent to expand upon the original answer.

(d) Neutral questions or comments - There are a number of questions or comments which are relatively neutral and are quite useful in encouraging more complete responses.

- Anything else?
- Any other reason?
- Any others?
- How do you mean?
- Could you tell me more about your thinking on that?
- Would you tell me what you have in mind?
- What do you mean?
- Why do you feel that way?
- Which would be closer to the way you feel?

These short queries indicate that the interviewer is interested and they make a direct request for more information. You will often find that a longer query is likely to elicit a longer answer with more information. "Are there any other reasons why you feel that way?" gives the respondent more time to think and generates a more well-thought-out answer than "Any other?" which is much more apt to have a "No" response.

Successful use of this technique requires that you recognize immediately just how the respondent's answer has failed to fully deal with the question, and be able to inject a suitable neutral query to get the respondent to expand on his/her answer. Mastery of this technique may require considerable effort on your part. New interviewers sometimes find it useful to write these standard queries on a card and keep the card where they can refer to it easily.

(e) Asking for further clarification - It is sometimes useful for you to appear slightly bewildered by the respondent's answer and infer that you do not fully understand. For example: "I'm not quite sure I know what you mean by that - could you explain it for me?" This technique can be useful if the respondent's answer is excessively brief and cryptic.

The technique should not be over-used, however, because the respondent may get the feeling that you appear to be somewhat dim-witted.

(f) Probing - This consists of somewhat more direct queries which are intended to assist in clarifying an idea in the respondent's mind, in order to elicit a more precise answer. Sometimes probing can be used to change a "Don't know" into a definitive answer, but you must take care that your probing remains neutral and does not lead the respondent into giving the answer that he/she thinks you may want.

The "I don't know" answer may mean any number of things. The four most common ones are:

- The respondent does not understand the concept behind the question and answers "Don't know" in order to avoid saying that he/she does not understand.
- The respondent is thinking about the question and says "Don't know" to fill the silence and to give him/herself time to consider it further;
- The respondent may be trying to evade the issue because he/she feels uninformed, or may give the wrong answer, or because the question appears to be too personal, etc.
- The respondent may really not know, or he/she may have no opinion on or attitude about the subject.

If the respondent does not have any knowledge about a particular subject or does not have any opinion or attitude about it, this is in itself significant for the survey. However, make a reasonable attempt to ensure that this is truly the case.

Here are a few examples of probes:

- Q.: How many people are employed in the plant where you work?
  A.: I don't know.
  Q.: Would you say fewer than a hundred or more than a hundred?
  A.: No, not that many, probably only about half that many.
  Q.: You mean about fifty.
  A.: Yes, I guess so.

The respondent apparently assumed that an exact number was wanted.

- Q.: Do you think you will be better off financially next year or not?
  A.: I'm not sure.
  Q.: In a previous question, I think you said that you have just received a raise in pay as the result of a promotion?
  A.: Yes, but we'll have two children in university next year and that will cost a lot.

The "Not sure" answer was clarified when the respondent explained that his greater income would be offset by higher expenditures.

- Q.: When did you take your vacation last year?
  A.: During the summer, sometime.
  Q.: Could you tell me how you spent your vacation?
  A.: Well, we went to Alberta to visit my husband's parents.
  Q.: Did you do anything special while you were there?
  A.: Not much. We went to the Stampede.
  Q.: The Calgary Stampede?
  A.: Yes, that's right.
  Q.: Then that would make it July?
  A.: Yes, it must have been.

The association of related events led the respondent and interviewer into agreeing on the month, which at least was more precise than "the summer, sometime".

7. Recording and Editing the Interview

The most common way of recording an interview is by writing down the answers in the answer spaces provided for each question, while the interview is talking place.

Questions are usually either:

- "Write-in" or "open-ended", in which the respondent's answer is recorded, exactly as the answer was expressed;
- "Check-off" or "closed-ended" in which the interviewer enters a mark in that box which most closely agrees with the respondent's answer.

Example of an open-ended question:

Q. If circumstances required you to look for another job, what do you feel would be the most effective way of finding one?

A. _____

_____

_____

Example of a closed-ended question:

Q. If circumstances required you to look for another job, what do you feel would be the most effective way of finding one?

( ) Send out resumés,

( ) Watch ads in daily and business papers,

( ) Visit potential employers,

( ) Check with government employment office,

( ) Ask friends for leads,

( ) Check with union or professional association,

( ) Don't know

( ) Other (please specify) _____

There are several other more complex types of questions, but they require that interviewers have special training and are outside the scope of this manual.

There are a number of general principles for recording answers to interview questions clearly and legibly:

(a) When starting the interview, try to find a place where you will be able to write comfortably. A table is ideal, but always carry a folder or pad with you to provide a hard writing surface. Try to sit so that you are facing the respondent so that he/she cannot read the questionnaire and observe exactly what you write.

(b) Record responses during the interview. When the respondent starts to answer, begin to write immediately. This will help you to record the answer verbatim and minimize the time the respondent has to wait for the next question. Answers can be forgotten or distorted if you try to remember what was said and write up the interview later.

Some survey offices issue a standard set of abbreviations for interviewers to use during interviews. If you use any of your own abbreviations during an interview, always write out the full answers immediately after each interview while they are fresh in your mind.

(c) Use the respondent's own words. You must learn to record the respondent's answers in the every words which he/she uses. This is called "verbatim recording". Slang should be recorded exactly as expressed, but not dialect.

(d) Do not summarize or paraphrase the respondent's answers - You may quite unintentionally distort the meaning or misplace the respondent's main idea.

However, there may be exceptional cases, such as an extremely locquacious respondent or one who drifts onto unrelated topics. Check with your survey office for specific instructions.

Similarly, some survey offices require that all probes be recorded on the questionnaire.

(e) Use a lead pencil to make all entries. Do not use a pen. An HB black lead pencil is usually the best overall choice. Carry several sharpened pencils with you, so that you always have a sharp one available. Pencil entries can be erased cleanly when you are "cleaning up" a questionnaire after an interview by writing out your abbreviations or notations made during the course of the interview. In general, coloured pencils are restricted to editors or coders in the survey office, so that the entries made by interviewers can be distinguished from all others.

(f) Account for each question in the questionnaire. If a respondent will not or cannot provide an answer to a question, make an appropriate notation in the margin: "Refused", DK (don't know), etc. Where the answer to a question involving numbers, such as income, is "None", enter a "0" in the appropriate entry space.

Remember that any question which has neither an entry nor a marginal notation is considered to have been overlooked entirely.

(g) On completion of an interview, check over the questionnaire before going on to the next interview.

- Are all administrative and identifier entries complete?
- Are all your abbreviations (i.e., personal shorthand) and notations spelled out so that they can be understood by others?
- Are all entries legible?
- If there were unusual problems, such as language difficulty, unavoidable interruption(s), difficult respondent, etc., have you noted this on the questionnaire?
- Have you recorded the interview on your interview record?

Note: Do not write requests to the survey office or ask any questions in the margin of questionnaires. Use a separate memo for these purposes. In most cases, completed questionnaires and memos from interviewers will go to different people in the survey office.

8. Strategies for planning calls and callbacks.

This section applies to those surveys which require that individuals be contacted at specific addresses.

At first, you may find it disconcerting that the person to be interviewed is often not available when you call, and feel that having to make callbacks is quite discouraging. However, there are several techniques which can reduce these problems substantially.

(a) Make your first call at each address in your assignment as early as possible in the survey period. You will complete some interviews at this call and can often get a "feel" as to the best time for a callback.

(b) Plan each trip to maximize the number of calls per trip. This is where a large map of the area to be surveyed can be useful in attempting to keep down the travel distance (and time lost) between interviews. As the interviews are completed these distances will increase, but hopefully by this time most of the questionnaires for your assignment will be on their way to the survey office.

(c) Plan to do your interviewing in large blocks of time, especially during the early part of the survey period. Later on, you may make a trip for one or two specific callbacks, as the result of making definite appointments.

(d) It is best to start working in those areas in which people are hardest to contact, early in the survey period. However, do not ignore addresses which are to be surveyed and happen to be located on the way to or from a difficult area.

(e) When planning your trips, use your knowledge of the typical routines of people in your survey area. For example, people in rural areas tend to have a different pattern of working hours than people in urban areas. Weekends may be a good time to find people at home in the late fall, but a poor time in the late spring. You may find it useful when planning your work, to anticipate major local events such as weekend sailing regattas, the deer hunting season, etc.

(f) If no one is at home when you call at an address, schedule future callbacks at different times of the day, on different days of the week and on weekends. Sometimes you can find out from neighbours when a prospective respondent is likely to be at home. Because you will be talking to many people and rescheduling numerous callbacks, it is strongly recommended that you keep a detailed callback record so that you do not mix up or forget appointments for interviews.

(g) Use discretion in setting up a definite appointment for an interview.

- If you do make an appointment, try to make it at the beginning of a trip so that you will not find yourself in the middle of an interview when you should be keeping an appointment.

- Good times for appointments are often the times that are bad for making calls, e.g., early in the morning, or during the lunch hour. Try to avoid making appointments during those hours which are most productive for making initial calls.

- If a respondent breaks an appointment (or two), try stopping by, unannounced, when you are in the neighbourhood.

- Do not use the telephone for making the initial contact for household surveys; it is too easy for the respondent to refuse an interview. However, you may certainly use the telephone to confirm an appointment.

- Be prepared to do other work during odd time periods between appointments when there is too little time to conduct another interview. This might include editing completed questionnaires, preparing progress reports, etc.

(h) Try not to let another member of the household refuse for the selected respondent. Your job requies that you talk directly to the selected respondent in person (unless your survey office expressly permits proxy interviews or the survey rules permit you to interview any person in the household).

(i) Try not to annoy reluctant respondents. If you are not getting anywhere on your first attempt at an interview, try to leave before you get a definite refusal, and before you might be considered a pest. You may have called at an unfortunate moment. Suggest that you call back on another day; make an appointment if the respondent suggests.

(j) In case of outright refusal or other difficulty in obtaining an interview, notify your survey office (or supervisor) as soon as you can do so conveniently, providing sufficient identification of the respondent that he/she can be reached by someone else. Sometimes a different approach (such as an official letter from the survey office requesting cooperation) or a different interviewer can turn a refusal into a completed interview.

9. Telephone Interviewing

The general principles of personal (face-to-face) interviewing also apply to telephone interviewing, but there are several major differences. In telephone interviewing, you do not have eye contact nor can you observe the respondent's "body language". Consequently, you have fewer intuitive clues as to whether or not the respondent understands the questions.

It is therefore more important to read the questions slowly and clearly. It is also essential to edit the interview as soon as it has been completed.

In telephone interviewing, there can be long pauses while you write down what the respondent has said. In order to fill these silences, you might utter an occasional "umm-umm" as you write or you may repeat the answer as you write, just as you would do in a personal interview. One shortcut is to underline that part of the question which corresponds to the respondent's answer. Personal shortcuts of this type must be written out in full immediately after you hang up, while the interview is fresh in your mind.

10. Sampling and its Application

Survey sampling is the process of selecting a fraction of the members from the group about which information is wanted. In order for this sample to provide results which are representative of the entire group, considerable care must be taken in selecting the sample. Ideally, each person in the entire group should be listed, and the sample selected by a completely random process. In practice, this may not always be feasible for any of a number of reasons: too time-consuming, the names of all persons in the group are not known, etc. There are a number of other, less expensive, ways of selecting a sample which are sometimes used for surveys.

Sampling usually causes some slight loss in accuracy, but this loss can usually be controlled by carefully following certain selection procedures. The quality of sample required for a particular survey is normally decided as part of survey planning. As an interviewer, your only concern is that you carefully follow the sampling instructions given to you.

Experience has shown that human judgement is not a reliable sampling technique. Every one of us uses a certain amount of selectivity in how we view others, and this causes us to have a tendency toward selecting a certain type of person who will share certain common attitudes and will therefore give answers which reflect these particular attitudes.

For example, if you are 19 years of age, you may not include a representative number of middle-aged and elderly people in your sample based on judgement. Conversely, if you are a retired person, you may not include as many young people as warranted by their percentage of the overall population. This is quite an obvious example, but the same principle applies to all samples where judgement is the basis of selection.

Another example would be a shopping mall survey where you are instructed to interview every tenth person who passes by. If this survey is carried

out at a time of day or evening other than that specified, the results could be quite misleading because the mix of people in a shopping mall changes several times every day. From 10.00 A.M. to 3.00 P.M., housewives and elderly people will predominate, but after 4.00 P.M., these will be replaced by students and business people. On Saturday, the pattern would be different again. The attitudes and interests of these various types of respondents would result in substantially different answers to survey questions.

Differences also exist between areas within every city and town. There will be differences in size of houses, the make and even the number of cars in the driveway, and in the way that properties are maintained. It is reasonable to assume that the interests, attitudes, income, education, to name only a few characteristics of residents, would also differ in these various areas.

Informal substitution of households by the interviewer must be avoided because the randomness in selection has been lost. Take, for example, a survey on travel habits. Quite often, a survey of this type requires more than the normal number of call-backs if the person who actually travels is to be interviewed in person, because the frequent traveller is more likely to be away from home. If the interviewer is over-eager to complete the interview, there is a temptation to substitute a neighbour who is at home, for the absent traveller. However, this neighbour may seldom travel and his responses would be quite different from those of the originally designated respondent.

Similarly, where the survey office has provided a formula for selecting a member of a household to be interviewed, this formula must be applied exactly as specified. Otherwise, the number of the most frequently-encountered type of person might be out of proportion to others. For example, if teenagers are selected more often than they should be, the survey results will reflect the attitudes of more than a proportional number of teenagers, and will underrepresent the principal wage-earners who were not at home when the survey was taken.

The survey office will have considered all these factors for the particular overall group about which information is to be collected, and the sampling plan will have been chosen to satisfy the needs of the particular survey. However, as an interviewer, you need concern yourself only with following the instructions which came with your assignment. This will be either:

(a) A list of the households or persons to be interviewed, or

(b) A procedure for selecting your own sample.

11. Planning and Managing Your Survey Assignment

(a) Organization of the Assignment

This section applies primarily to personal interviews.

(a) Check your survey kit for completeness. Shortages or missing items should be reported immediately so that replacements can be obtained or delivered before they hold up your work.

If there is anything that you do not understand about the assignment, find out the answer before you begin work.

(b) Use a map. If the survey office has not provided a large-scale map of the area in which you are to work, request one, or find one on your own. It will enable you to lay out the best routes to follow during your interviewing trips if your survey office has not specified a particular route.

(c) Prepare an interviewing kit. If the survey office has not specified which forms and how many questionnaires to take with you, select a basic kit on your own. It should contain a clipboard, map, control forms (such as lists of addresses to be sampled), a form for recording interviewing progress, and enough questionnaires for the trip plus a few spares, and a few sharp HB pencils.

The spare questionnaires will enable you to complete a few additional interviews in a day if some of the respondents are not at home when you call.

(d) Travel light. Carry only the forms and supplies needed for one trip (i.e., one day's work), plus a few spares. Carrying a heavy bag or case can be tiring.

(e) Use the specified pencil always.

(f) Safeguard security of completed questionnaires. If you must carry completed questionnaires with you, take care that they are out of sight of subsequent respondents and that they are not left behind when you leave after each interview.

(b) Keeping Survey Records

The survey records which you are required to keep up-to-date at all times during an assignment serve a number of purposes. If a survey covers several weeks, it is usually imperative for the survey office to receive periodic reports on "percentage completion to date" and other measures of progress in order to know how the survey is progressing.

If the survey is a large one, with a crew of interviewers dispersed over a wide geographic area, the survey office will be hard-pressed to ensure that interviews will be completed on time and the completed questionnaires available for processing on schedule.

For instance, if an interviewer reports "0" interviews completed halfway through the survey period, it will probably trigger immediate steps by the survey office to take corrective action in order to get the assignment done by the deadline. This may involve sending in a replacement interviewer to assist or possibly replace the original interviewer. The reasons for the delay can be investigated later.

The Record of Interviews is more than a record of interviews completed. It also gives an overview of the number of callbacks made, and a breakdown of the reasons for nonresponse, all of which are of considerable interest to the survey office.

When an interviewer becomes sick or is otherwise unable to complete the assignment and asks the survey office to send in a replacement interviewer, the new interviewer should be able to find out quickly from the original interviewer's records -

- which interviews have been completed,
- which respondents are to receive callbacks,
- which respondents have not yet been contacted.

Records should be kept up-to-date on a day-by-day basis or even an interview-by-interview basis, while the events are fresh in your mind.

(c) Contact with the Survey Office

The survey office will be quite interested in the progress of your assignment and, to you, may appear to take an excessive interest. Do not assume that this interest is necessarily directed at your performance. There may have been problems associated with planning the survey, which were not settled completely, and the survey office staff are now interested in watching the survey being conducted, to learn whether they made the best operational decision.

Dependability is one of the characteristics of an interviewer most valued by the survey office. Part of this dependability involves keeping the survey office informed of your work progress, of your difficulties and, above all, of anything which will cause delays or prevent you from carrying out your assignment on time. This will enable the survey office to take suitable action before it is too late.

The survey office will also carry out some quality control checks from time to time. These will be intended to check a number of aspects of the survey, one of which, of course, is how closely you have followed your survey instructions.

INTERVIEWER APPLICATION FORM

(Confidential when completed)

Mr. ( )
Mrs. ( )
Miss ( ) Given
Ms. ( ) name _____ Surname _____

Mailing address

Social insurance number

Telephone number

Is this a private line?
Yes ( ) No ( )

Education (Highest level completed)

Do you have a working knowledge of French Yes ( ) No ( )

Do you have a working knowledge of any other language? (Please specify)

Do you have any health problems or physical limitations? Yes ( ) No ( )

If "Yes", please describe any which might affect your ability to carry out the work of an interviewer (such as climbing stairs, long and irregular working hours, etc.)?

Do you have a car available at all times (days, evenings, weekends)? Yes ( ) No ( )

If "No", when is car available?

Are you available to work full time during the survey (including weekends, staying away overnight, irregular hours, etc.)? Yes ( ) No ( )

If you are unable to meet these requirements, please give details.

Are you available for work anywhere within _____ (area) Yes ( ) No ( )

If not, please specify in what areas you are able to work:

_____

 (Reverse side of form)

INTERVIEWER APPLICATION FORM

Previous work experience (Give details: employers, titles & duties, with dates)

Last job:

Second last job:

Have you had experience in interviewing or canvassing? Yes ( ) No ( )

If "Yes", give details:

Please describe briefly any other experience not shown above that you feel qualifies you for work as an interviewer:

Specify date on which you would be available for work:

Signature _____ Date _____

(Front side of form)

INTERVIEWER WEEKLY CLAIM SHEET

Project title _____ Project No. _____

Interviewer _____ Interviewer's No. _____

Location _____

Name of Supervisor _____

This claim covers period from (date) _____ to (date) _____

Amount claimed ..... $ _____

Details of this claim are shown on the reverse side of this sheet.

Statement of Interviewer

I declare that this claim is a true statement of the time and money spent by me on the above-mentioned project.

Interviewer's signature _____ Date _____

This space for office use only

Checked by _____

Approved by _____

Cheque No. _____

 (Reverse side of sheet)

INTERVIEWER WEEKLY CLAIM SHEET

Interviewer _____ Interviewer's No. _____

From (date) _____ To (date) _____

Day of week		Hours worked: Start	Finish	Totals	Interviews completed	Mileage	Meals	Comments
Monday	Morning						B $	
	Afternoon						L $	
	Evening						D $	
Tuesday	Morning						B $	
	Afternoon						L $	
	Evening						D $	
Wednesday	Morning						B $	
	Afternoon						L $	
	Evening						D $	
Thursday	Morning						B $	
	Afternoon						L $	
	Evening						D $	
Friday	Morning						B $	
	Afternoon						L $	
	Evening						D $	
Saturday	Morning						B $	
	Afternoon						L $	
	Evening						D $	
Totals for week →							$	

Incidental Expenses Incurred

Summary of Expenses

_____ hours x (rate)..$_____

_____ miles x (rate)..$_____

Meals.....$_____

Incidental expenses.....$_____

Total claimed.....$_____

RECORD OF INTERVIEWS

Project location

Project name

Project No.

Interviewer's name

Interviewer's No.

Name and address	Reason why interview not completed							Interview completed (✓)	Comments
	No one at home (✓)	House-hold does not qualify (✓)	Respondent qualifies but is not at home. Appointment made for (✓)	Time	Date	Refused (state why)	Other (sickness, language, etc.) (specify)		

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